



Parenting East Dunbartonshire

For Information email: parenting@eastdunbarton.gov.uk

TOP TEN TIPS FOR PARENTS

1. When your child wants to show you something, stop what you are doing and pay attention to your child. It is important to spend frequent, small amounts of time with your child doing things that you both enjoy.
2. Give your child lots of physical affection - children often like hugs, cuddles and holding hands.
3. Talk to your child about things he/she is interested in and share aspects of your day with your child.
4. Give your child lots of descriptive praise when they do something that you would like to see more of e.g. "Thank you for doing what I asked straight away".
5. Children are more likely to misbehave when they are bored so provide lots of engaging indoor and outdoor activities for your child e.g. playdough, colouring in, cardboard boxes, dress ups, cubby houses, etc.
6. Teach your child new skills by first showing the skill yourself, then giving your child opportunities to learn the new skill. For example, speak politely to each other in the home. Then, prompt your child to speak politely (e.g. say "please" or "thank you") and praise your child for their efforts.
7. Set clear limits on your child's behaviour. Sit down and have a family discussion on the rules in the home. Let your child know what the consequences will be if they break the rules.
8. If your child misbehaves, stay calm and give them a clear instruction to stop misbehaving and tell them what you would like them to do instead (e.g. "Stop fighting, play nicely with each other." Praise your child if they stop. If they do not stop, follow through with an appropriate consequence.
9. Have realistic expectations. All children misbehave at times and it is inevitable that you will have some discipline hassles. Trying to be the perfect parent can set you up for frustration and disappointment.
10. Look after yourself. It is difficult to be a calm, relaxed parent if you are stressed, anxious or depressed. Try to find time every week to let yourself unwind or do something that you enjoy.



PARENT TRAPS

- Do you frequently feel exasperated, frustrated or embarrassed by your child's behaviour?
- Do you find that your child often irritates you?
- Do you have to threaten and shout to get your child to co-operate?
- Do you frequently argue with your partner about how to handle your child's behaviour?

If the answer to some of these questions is yes, then you might have become caught in what I call a parent trap

Parent traps are consistent ways of interacting with your children, your partner or your own inner thoughts that actually make the difficult job of raising children even harder. They add to the everyday burden of stress that many parents experience and weaken the effectiveness of dealing with your child's problem behaviour.

A lot of work in our parenting program is done with parents to help them out of these traps and into a strategy of guiding children's behaviour without resorting to constant yelling, stressful conflict and frustration. This involves learning how to motivate children positively through encouragement when they are behaving well and working as a team with your partner on parenting issues.

The result of such a positive approach is to ease parents' burden and put more fun and satisfaction back into family life.

So, what are some parent traps that you might recognise in your own family?

The criticism trap involves becoming locked into frequent and unnecessary power struggles with your child typically resulting in the parent reacting to misbehaviour with escalating criticism ("**Robert, leave your brother alone**") threats ("**If you do that one more time you're in big trouble**") yelling and finally hitting. This type of discipline often backfires, with the parent's rapidly building anger, serving to lead to resentment and further hostility between parent and child. If these kinds of battles take place frequently, it is time to try a new way of handling the situation.

The leave them alone trap occurs in combination with the criticism trap and involves the parent simply ignoring their child when they are behaving well or playing quietly. If good behaviour is taken for granted and not actively encouraged it will occur less often in the future and is likely to be replaced with the misbehaviour that receives so much attention. A basic principle of positive parenting is the praising and rewarding of behaviours you would like to see more often.

The for the sake of the children trap occurs when parents are in unhappy marriages and rather than learning new ways to resolve their constant marital conflict and frustrations they stick doggedly to the same marriage routines believing the sake of the children is more important. Research shows time and again that, children who live in families where there is a lot of conflict and stress between the parenting partners, develop more emotional and behavioural problems than those raised in stable families regardless of whether that stable family is a one or two-parent family.

The perfect parent trap is the result of the human desire to be perfect rather than just competent. There is no such thing as a perfect parent and aspiring to become one will only lead to disappointment, resentment, guilt and feelings of inadequacy. Rather it is better to realise that parenting has elements of both a learned skill and an ongoing loving relationship between individuals.

The Martyr trap is one where parents become so over-involved in the task of parenting that they begin to neglect their own needs for intimacy, companionship, recreation, privacy and fun. In these cases a parent's relationship with their partner will suffer and they may end up feeling dissatisfied and resentful. Quality parenting takes place when adults have their own lives in balance.



DEALING WITH DISOBEDIENCE

The majority of parents smack their children at least occasionally. But research tells us that the more you smack your child the more likely your child will develop further behaviour problems. Smacking may serve as a model of aggression - the very behaviour we want our children to be able to control.

So, is it child abuse to give an occasional smack for naughty behaviour?

No it is not. What we, as parents, need to keep in mind is that any harsh, unpredictable punishment given in anger, such as smacking, can be severely damaging to children. Anything that has the power to invoke fear, anger and retribution in our children carries risks.

But while an occasional single smack is not likely to turn your child into an aggressive adult, it is ultimately a negative approach to dealing with misbehaviour. And for children with more severe behaviour problems, research shows that smacking is not very effective.

So, how do we deal with misbehaviour?

Firstly, expect it. We are humans, not angels and we must all live our lives within limits. For children these limits must be fair and appropriate and, for their own safety, they need to learn to accept those limits. However, the process of learning takes time. Disobedience from your child shouldn't really be considered a problem unless it occurs frequently, such as when your child follows less than half the instructions given to them.

Parents will usually first experience disobedience when their child becomes a toddler. Toddlers are mobile and just beginning to learn independence and assertiveness. They may start to resist you. When you say "no" it can be like a dare to them. It is important to deal with this disobedience firmly and decisively. However, misusing or over using smacking to deal with this disobedience will cause harm.

Look for practical and effective alternatives.

For a start, make sure that you don't give too many instructions. Remember that every time you give your child an instruction to do something there is an opportunity for disobedience. Be clear in what you are saying and ensure that your child understands exactly what is required. If your child is busy watching their favourite television show accept that you are likely to be ignored until you can calmly and effectively gain their full attention.

With young children, when you see problem behaviour occurring, stop what you are doing and move to within an arm's length of your child and bend down to their eye level. Gain their attention by using their name, hold their hands firmly and say "no" in a firm calm voice while frowning and shaking your head from side to side.



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With older children you should tell your child specifically what you want them to stop doing and what they should do instead. Be consistent with your attitudes to misbehaviour and choose a logical consequence if your child does not do as you ask. Where possible remove the activity or toy that is at the centre of the problem and explain why you are doing this - **"Frank, you have not done as I asked. TV is off for 10 minutes"**.

To help give your older child more independence provide them with options to choose from where possible. Make sure they know the difference between choices and instructions and try not to give them too many choices about everyday routines.

Above all, don't forget to praise and reward your children when they behave.

PARENTING TIP:

A good way to reduce the number of times you have to deal with disobedience is to reduce the chances of your child doing something that you don't want them to do. If you make some temporary changes in your home this can prevent you from having to continually tell your toddler "No" and "Don't touch". Put valuable and fragile things out of reach, use child-proof catches on cupboards and close doors and gates to areas where it is not safe for your child to be alone.

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MANAGING MISBEHAVIOUR

Establish clear ground rules: Children need limits to know what is expected of them and how they should behave. A few basic house rules (for or five) can help. Rules should tell children what to do rather than what not to do. **Walk in the house, Speak in a pleasant voice and Keep your hands and feet to yourself** are better rules than **don't run, don't shout and don't fight**. Rules work best when they are fair, easy to follow and you can back them up.

- **Use directed discussion to deal with rule breaking:** Directed discussion is best used when a child occasionally forgets a basic house rule; it involves gaining your child's attention, telling your child the problem explaining briefly why it is a problem and describing or getting your child to suggest the correct behaviour. The correct behaviour can then be practised.

- **Use planned ignoring to deal with problem behaviour.** Planned ignoring means to deliberately pay no attention to a child when a minor behaviour occurs. Minor problems include whining, using a silly voice and saying rude words. When you ignore a behaviour do not look at or talk to your child.
- **Give clear calm instructions:** It is important to give children instructions that are clear and direct. When you want your child to do something, be prepared to back up your instruction. It is not reasonable to always insist on instant obedience. When you want your child to start a new task, where possible, let your child finish what they are doing, or wait for a break in their activity, before giving an instruction.
- **Back up your instructions with logical consequences:** Logical consequences are best used for mild problem behaviours that do not occur too often. If your child does not follow a rule or a clear instruction, then choose a consequence that fits the situation. If possible, remove the activity or the toy that is at the centre of the problem. Logical consequences work best if they are brief - 5 - 10 minutes is usually long enough.
- **Use quiet time to deal with misbehaviour:** Quiet time is a brief, mild and effective way of helping children learn more acceptable behaviour. Use quiet time if your child does not do as you have asked. Quiet time involves removing your child from the activity in which a problem has occurred and having them sit quietly on the edge of the activity for a short time.
- **Use time-out to deal with serious misbehaviour:** time-out is a positive strategy to use instead of shouting at, threatening or smacking a child who has misbehaved. When it is used correctly, it can be an extremely effective way of helping children learn self-control and more acceptable behaviour. The main advantage of time-out is that it requires you, the parent, to remain calm. If you become angry, you risk losing your temper and hurting your child. Time-out gives everyone the chance to calm down. You can use time-out when your child does not stay in quiet time, or as a consequence for temper outbursts or serious misbehaviour such as hurting others.

KEEPING TRACK OF YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR

- It involves writing down when and where problem behaviour happened, what happened before and afterwards (what you did).
- It will help you to identify patterns in your child's behaviour.
- How often it happens and how you deal with your child's behaviour.
- High risk times or situations and possible triggers or causes.
- Possible accidental rewards.
- Keep track of your child's behaviour for a week before you start to tackle the situation with a plan.
- Continue to keep track once you have started your plan.
- Remember the best way to change your child's behaviour and your own is to do it slowly.
- Stop keeping the diary once you are happy with you and your child's progress.

HOW TO USE YOUR STAR CHART

- They should only be used for a few weeks.
- The chart should be backed up with a reward e.g. special time with you, a comic. Ask your child what they would like - within reason!
- Decide the behaviour for which you are going to use the chart and use positive language e.g. "talking nicely" rather than "not shouting".
- Decide and talk to your child about how often they can earn a star.
- Decide the number of stars your child can earn before they get their reward and to start with make it an easy goal to achieve, 2 or 3 stars. Make sure your child understands.
- Praise your child when they earn a star.
- Give the reward when they reach their goal.
- Once they are reaching their goal every day, only reward every second day and then at the end of the week.
- Once the reward is weekly you could make it a special family event e.g. go swimming, a trip to the park. Special events like this can really encourage your child to achieve their goal.

TRIPLE P TIP SHEETS

Infants	Toddlers
Crying	Bedtime Problems
Promoting Development	Disobedience 1
Separation Anxiety	Hurting Others
Sleep Patterns	Independent Eating
	Language
	Sharing
	Tantrums
	Toilet Training
	Wandering
	Whining

Pre Schoolers	Primary Schoolers
Disobedience 2	ADHD
Fighting and Aggression	Bedwetting
Going Shopping	Behaviour at School
Having Visitors	Being Bullied
Interrupting	Chores
Mealtime Problems	Creativity
Nightmare and Night Terrors	Fears
Separation Problems	Homework
Tidying up	Lying
Travelling in Car	Self-Esteem
	Sport
	Stealing
	Swearing

Teen	Parenting Seminar Services
Coping with Anxiety	Balancing Work and Family
Coping with Depression	Being a Parent
Drinking Alcohol	Coping with Stress
Eating Habits	Feeling depressed after birth of your child
Fads & Fashion	Home Safety
Friends and Peer Relationships	Preparing your Child for new baby
Money and Work	The Power of Positive Parenting
Rudeness and Disrespect	Raising Confident, Competent Children
Sexual Behaviour and Dating	Raising Resilient Children
Smoking	
Truancy	
Taking Drugs	

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